

when the States said, “Well, hey, we formed this country; we’ve got the right to get out.” And Abraham Lincoln said, “I don’t think so. I don’t think so.” [Laughter] And he was willing to give a half a million lives, including his own life, to keep this country together, and then to face the next question: “Well, if we’re going to stay together, don’t we have to quit lying about who we are? How can we have a Constitution that says all of us are created equal and keep slavery? So we’ve got to get rid of that.” Think how different this country would be if we hadn’t made that decision 130-odd years ago. Think how different. Would all the other immigrants be here today? Would this place look like it does today? I don’t think so.

Think how different this country would have been when Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had to manage our transition from being a rural country of small farmers to an urban country of great cities like this one, which Mayor Menino leads so well today. Think how different it would have been if they had answered these questions differently. They had to say, okay, now we’re an industrial country. Are we going to let a few monopolies run out all the small-business people, or are we going to preserve free enterprise? They voted for free enterprise. Are we going to let these big companies destroy our natural heritage, or are we going to preserve things like the Grand Canyon and other national parks and keep something for all generations to come? Are we going to let our children work 70 hours a week in coal mines and sweatshops as they were doing then, or are we going to stop that and give our children their childhoods back and their education? Think how different America would be if we had answered those questions differently.

These are the questions that are being asked of you and your generation. These are the kinds of questions that we are facing. When you ask which budget do you want, it’s really about what kind of people are we. Are we going together, respecting our differences, building a bridge? Or are we going to say, “It’s every person for himself; I wish you well”?

I believe I know the answer. And I ask those of you who are young—you have 38 days. John Kerry has earned the right to be reelected Senator from Massachusetts, because he has been on the side of your future—on the side of your future.

You do not have to believe one bad thing personally about his opponent. You do not have to make this a negative race at all. All you have to do is to look at the fundamental choices before you. And for those of you who are young especially, I say, imagine in your mind what you want this country to be like in 4 years when we go roaring into a new century and a new millennium, what you want our country to be like when your own children are your age. What do you want the history of America to be 100 years from now? What will they say about what we did now? I hope they’ll say America decided it takes a village, and we’re going to build a bridge to the 21st century that we can all walk across.

Thank you. God bless you. Bear down and bring home a victory for us. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 p.m. at the Fleet Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. William F. Weld of Massachusetts, actor Christopher Reeve, and Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston.

Remarks Announcing the White House Middle East Summit and an Exchange With Reporters

September 29, 1996

The President. Good morning. The loss of life and the tragedy of the violence in the Middle East this week have been a terrible development for the Israeli and the Palestinian people, a blow to all those who work for a lasting peace, an

encouragement to those who oppose a lasting peace.

Earlier this week I called on Israelis and Palestinians to end the cycle of violence, to restore calm, to recommit themselves to the hard work of building peace through negotiations. There

has been some progress since then toward ending the confrontation but not enough. Therefore, after consulting with Secretary Christopher, who has literally been working around the clock with the regional leaders to resolve this problem, I have invited Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat to come to Washington as soon as possible. They have accepted my invitation, as has King Hussein of Jordan. I've also invited President Mubarak of Egypt; he is seeing whether it is possible for him to attend. I expect the meetings to take place early this week.

The United States has often played a pivotal role in bringing Arabs and Israelis together to work out their differences in peace. It is our responsibility to do whatever we can to protect the peace process and to help move it forward. This is such a moment.

The events of this week are all the more shocking because the Israelis and the Palestinians have taken so many giant steps toward peace in the last couple of years. They have shown the world that they want peace. They know they must make hard choices to achieve that goal.

I'm prepared to do everything in my power to help the Israelis and the Palestinians end the violence and begin the peace process again in earnest. We have to return to the path of peace along which they have already traveled so far.

Q. Mr. President, do you think that Israel is ready to abide by its promise to keep previous peace agreements made by other governments?

The President. Well, President—excuse me—Prime Minister Netanyahu says that he will abide by all previous agreements and that is

an understanding that he has reached with Chairman Arafat. We will be discussing the relevant issues here to the recent violence and what can be done to really get the peace process back on track when they come here.

Q. What do you think made them decide to come to Washington? They seem so adamantly opposed before.

The President. I believe that—I think they're both concerned about the way events spun out of control, about the loss of life, the injury, the eruption of old tensions and bitterness. And I believe they want to try to get beyond that and go back to moving toward the path of peace. I don't think they would be coming here if they didn't.

Q. What would you ask them to do?

The President. Well, I firmly believe that one of the reasons for the success we have had in the last 3 years is that the United States has not presumed to speak publicly for either one of them and we have been very careful about what we say, particularly in advance of these meetings. I'm going to do everything I can to facilitate a resolution of this, and I don't want to say anything before they get here that would complicate that.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel, Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority, King Hussein I of Jordan, and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Omnibus Parks Legislation

September 29, 1996

I am pleased that the House voted last night to approve legislation that would improve our management of the national parks and other Federal lands. The bill represents a victory for all Americans who treasure and want to preserve our natural resources.

This bill includes my top priorities for parks legislation. That is, it includes provisions to im-

prove the management of the Presidio in San Francisco, help acquire the Sterling Forest in the New York/New Jersey Highlands Region, and establish the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Kansas.

At the same time, the bill deletes almost all of the provisions of the earlier conference agreement that the administration had found objec-